

John Sudam House  
Kingston  
Ulster County  
New York

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PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORIC AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA  
District 3 of New York

Historic American Buildings Survey

Prepared by Washington Office

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THE JOHN SUDAM HOUSE

Corner of Wall and Main Streets, Kingston,  
Ulster County, N. Y.

Historical Introduction

The following article is taken from an issue of "Olde Ulster" under date of December, 1912, and is titled--  
"The Residence of John Sudam."

"On the northwest corner of Wall and Main Streets in the city of Kingston, New York, stands a very interesting old house. It occupies the site (nearly) of the home of Elias Hasbrouck, who was a captain in the War of the Revolution, and served as such in the Continentals, in the Third Regiment of the New York Line, under Colonel James Clinton and Lieutenant Colonel Jacobus Bruyn. When the British Troops under Colonel Vaughan, October 15, 1777, burned Kingston the house was burned. Captain Elias Hasbrouck rendered distinguished service, having been with Montgomery at Quebec and was an active participant in many of the campaigns of that war.

After peace came, the old house was not rebuilt. The property passed into the hands of the Elmendorf family. About the beginning of the nineteenth century John Sudam, a rising and brilliant young lawyer, having married into the Elmendorf family, built upon the corner of the lot and almost upon the site of the old stone dwelling burned by the British, a large two story frame residence which is standing today, the residence of Miss Mary Van Leuven. This is the dwelling in our illustration this month.

John Sudam was one of the historic lawyers and long remembered orators of the Ulster County Bar. Two generations or more ago, whenever forensic oratory was mentioned, it always evoked a reference to the matchless oratory of John Sudam, were any present who could recall the days of the early decades of the nineteenth century. Not only was his reputation at the bar high, but he had been elected to the Senate of the State of New York in 1823 and again in 1833. Here he won high rank by his industry, intellectual vigor and capability. His talents were not only those which showed well, but he was able to hold his own with the great men of his day, who were impressed with his solid worth. His friends were numerous and influential.

While serving as senator the second time he died in Albany, at a session of the Legislature on Monday evening April 13, 1835. He was also a regent of the University of the State of New York, in which office he was succeeded by his friend, Washington Irving. His funeral was in Albany, and was a large one, noticable in the numbers of prominent men attending it, and the exercises in Kingston were similarly long in remembrance.

Among the intimate friends of John Sudam were Martin Van Buren and Washington Irving. During the year preceding his death he received a visit from them both. In the first issue of "Olde Ulster" Vol. 1, page 10, a letter of Irving was published in which he speaks of this visit. In the issue of the Ulster Republican, now the Kingston Argus for Wednesday September 18, 1833 we find this local news item:

"Martin Van Buren, Vice-President of the U.S., and Washington Irving, Esq. arrived in this village yesterday afternoon and tarried at the residence of the Hon. John Sudam. We learn that it is their intention to remain here till Thursday."

The issue of the same paper for the week following thus speaks of the visit:

"The VICE PRESIDENT and WASHINGTON IRVING, Esq., did not depart from this village until near noon on Friday last. During their stay, they rode out to several of the contiguous settlements, and called on several former acquaintances. of Mr. Van Buren in this village, who received them with that cordial welcome which merit and distinguished talents ever secure to their possessors. While arrangements were being made for their departure, Mr. Van Buren repaired to the Ulster County House, where he spent an hour in company with many of our citizens. That he possesses in an uncommon degree the affections and confidence of the republicans (Democrats) of Ulster, no one can for a moment doubt; and should he obtain the nomination to succeed Gen. Jackson to the presidency, their vote will prove the truth of their high regard for the valuable public services, exalted talents, and private worth of New York's Favorite Son. They left here for Orange County."

It is a well known historic fact that Martin Van Buren was elected President of the United States at the next presidential election in 1836 and took his seat March 4, 1837.

The Ulster County House was a noted tavern of that day, and stood upon the site of the Kingston Leader and Kingston Argus Buildings, adjoining the court house.

The letter of Irving describing this visit is to his brother Peter, and is in these words:

" "New York, October 28, 1833.

My dear Brother:-

I have been moving about almost incessantly during the summer and autumn, visiting old scenes about the Hudson. I made a delightful journey with Mr. Van Buren (then Vice President of the United States and soon to be elected President) in an open carriage from Kinderhook to Poughkeepsie, then crossing the river to the country about the foot of the Catskill Mountains, and so from Esopus (Kingston) by Goshen, Haverstraw, Tappan, Hackensack, to Communipaw (Jersey City) -- an expedition which took two weeks to complete, in the course of which we visited curious old Dutch places and Dutch families."

#### Architectural Description

This house is one of the few early frame houses left standing in Kingston. It is an interesting example of good Colonial Architecture of the well-to-do citizen of this vicinity, and has some exceptionally good exterior and interior details.

The house is built with heavy posts and girts forming bays. The walls are filled in with stud and the heavy timbers are concealed. The exterior is of clapboard, while

the walls and ceilings on the interior are plastered. As shown on Cellar Floor Plan, sheet No. 1, the oven would seem to indicate that this space was used as a bakery, but not as the kitchen as there is no evidence of any fire-place in the chimney breast foundation. There had been at one time, a hot air heating plant in the house; but at present there is a modern hot water or steam plant. Modern plumbing has been installed. There is a servants' toilet occupying the closet space off the laundry, and the closet adjoining with the door opening from the rear hall is now used as a lavatory. On the second floor the large hall closet is now used as a bath.

New Floors have been laid over the old in some of the rooms, but there is still ample evidence of the wide painted boards as originally used throughout the house.

The house has always been kept in good condition; and re-painted frequently --- using Colonial Yellow for the house as a whole, and white for the trim.

The house was erected in 1800, and the present owner is Cornelius Van Leuven, of Wilmington, North Carolina, formerly of Kingston, New York.

Written, April 26, 1934, by

*Myron S. Teller*

Approved:

*Wm. D. King, Jr.*

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